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Television Business International

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April/May 2017

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**Editor** Stewart Clarke • [stewart.clarke@knect365.com](mailto:stewart.clarke@knect365.com) • @TBIstewart

**Deputy editor** Jesse Whittock • [jesse.whittock@knect365.com](mailto:jesse.whittock@knect365.com) • @TBI\_Jesse

**Sales manager** Kate Roach • [kate.roach@knect365.com](mailto:kate.roach@knect365.com)

**Art director** Matthew Humberstone • [matthew.humberstone@knect365.com](mailto:matthew.humberstone@knect365.com)

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149 Tottenham Court Road, London W1T 7AD

**Tel:** +44 (0)20 7017 5000

**e-mail:** [tbi@knect365.com](mailto:tbi@knect365.com) **web:** [www.tbivision.com](http://www.tbivision.com)

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# Laying down the Law

Dan Povenmire and Jeff “Swampy” Marsh are the creators of animated classic *Phineas and Ferb*. Their new show, *Milo Murphy’s Law*, follows the 13-year-old great-great-great-grandson of the Murphy of Murphy’s Law repute, and has already gone out on Disney in the US. “Weird Al” Yankovic voices the optimistic Milo and sings the theme tune, and other voice talent includes Christian Slater.

Ahead of a launch in the UK on Disney Channel and DisneyLife in early April, the animation A-listers were in London and sat down with Stewart Clarke to talk about their shows and the animation business

**TBI:** Was *Milo Murphy’s Law* a long time in the making?

**Dan Povenmire:** No, [Milo] was a drawing I was thinking of pitching for a secondary character for another show. Every time I looked at it I thought it popped and should be the main character. Swampy agreed, and within an hour we had the whole show worked out, and the plot for the pilot. A week later we had the opening for the pilot.

**‘Swampy’ Marsh:** When you find something that works it tends to come together fast.

**TBI:** Was that the same with *Phineas and Ferb*?

**DP:** With *Phineas and Ferb* we built that world very fast, probably in a day, and it went on air looking pretty much like that, but it took 13 years to sell it. The thing is, now we have *Phineas and Ferb* on our CVs, it only took a month to sell *Milo Murphy’s Law*.

**SM:** It’s much easier to take a chance on us now.

**TBI:** There’s some A-list voice talent in there. How did that come together?

**DP:** It fell together very easily this time, partially in thanks to the success of *Phineas and Ferb*. Christian Slater had done one episode, and had such a good time that he called us up the day the show was announced to see if he could have a role. We wrote something specifically for him.

The hardest [voice to find] was Milo. We auditioned and auditioned and then someone mentioned “Weird Al”. We were looking for someone who sounded genuinely positive without sounding like they were putting it





on, and we'd met him couple of times, so we recorded him and suddenly it worked.

**TBI: What was the look you were going after?**

**DP:** We still wanted it to look like the same universe as *Phineas and Ferb* in the way *Futurama* looks like same universe as *The Simpsons*, so it was really about what other characters and stories we could tell in that place. You feel like Phineas and Ferb live here and Milo is maybe a couple of neighborhoods over. Because of that you can hide Easter eggs for fans of both shows.



Dan Povenmire and Jeff "Swampy" Marsh

**TBI: Could Phineas or Ferb appear in *Milo*, or vice versa?**

**SM:** It could conceivably happen. Dan has described it before as like a Marvel Universe that we are building; we know they're all playing somewhere in the same playground and the possibility they meet always exists.

**TBI: And the storytelling is different with the new show. How was it making a series with a serialised element?**

**SM:** *Phineas and Ferb* contained stories without an overall arc. This time we had the opportunity to do a whole season arc so that the story builds.

**DP:** There is a big story to follow that gets really complicated towards the middle and then ebbs back, and then builds again. Because it takes so long to do animation, we could be writing episode twelve and then go back to episode seven and seed in something, which makes us look a lot smarter than we are. It also makes us look like we planned everything from the beginning.

**TBI: Have you scoped out a full three- or five-season plan?**

**DP:** No, but we have a second-season arc and have talked about what we would do if we got a third season. We hope a third would have elements from first two.

**TBI: The way people watch TV has changed. This is on DisneyLife as well as linear; does that change the way you approach making shows?**

**DP:** TV has changed a lot, and that is part of why we wanted to serialise *Milo Murphy's Law* a little. People will binge and go through all 220 episodes of *Phineas and Ferb* in two weeks. If that's the way people start to watch, we can take that into account.

**TBI: Technology has evolved since you started on *Phineas and Ferb*. How does that affect the day-to-day?**

**SM:** You don't actually end up making significant time savings in production, mostly because time-saving devices and processes usually mean you spend time doing more drawings. We have bought ourselves that time.

**TBI: It's a golden age of drama. Can the same be said of animation?**

**DP:** We've been through several: there was the original golden age and then one around *The Simpsons* and *Batman* and *Ren & Stimpy*. There are ebbs and flows where suddenly a bunch of good stuff is happening. I think for TV this is another golden age; there is so much good content being made.

**SM:** What is also relevant now is you have people at home with the power on their laptop to make a full-on show. That's amazing. **TBI**

# The Kids Matrix

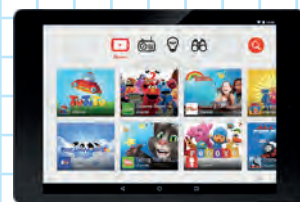
An at-a-glance look at the biggest news in children's television this year – in grid form



Netflix has acquired Sesame Workshop and CBeebies kids series **THE FURCHESTER HOTEL**



**BRIAN ROBBINS** has left AwesomenessTV, the teen MCN he founded



**YOUTUBE** adding kids content to its paid-for Red service

## Live Action



KiKa has acquired the new **TELETUBBIES**, marking the return of the iconic preschool series in the German market



Disney EMEA is launching *So Sammy*, a new shortform kids series from British comedian and actor **MIRANDA HART**



France Télévisions buys teen novella series **LOVE, DIVINA**



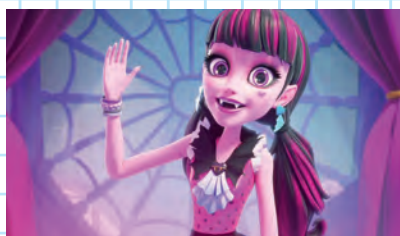
Nickelodeon is taking the kids to the *Lip Sync Battle* arena with a spin-off of the popular Spike format, **LIP SYNC BATTLE SHORTIES**



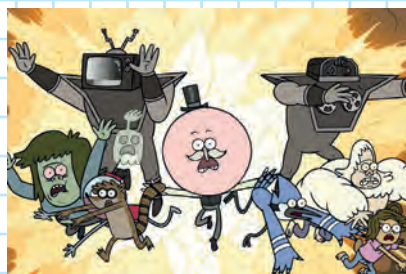
igital



Chinese **IQIYI** buys 300 hours of **CBEEBIES** programming



Mattel's new *Monster High* series, **THE ADVENTURES OF THE GHOULS SQUAD**, will debut on YouTube,



Australian SVOD service **STAN** becomes the exclusive streaming home of Cartoon Network programming



Outfit7 sells **TALKING TOM and Friends** to an Asian consortium for US\$1 billion

# Animation



CBeebies orders *Moon and Me*, the debut series from Suttiki, the partnership of *In the Night Garden* **ANDREW DAVENPORT**'s new prodco and Bento Box Entertainment's kids division



Channel 5 orders animated preschool series about an energetic chef and his daughter, **SHANE THE CHEF**

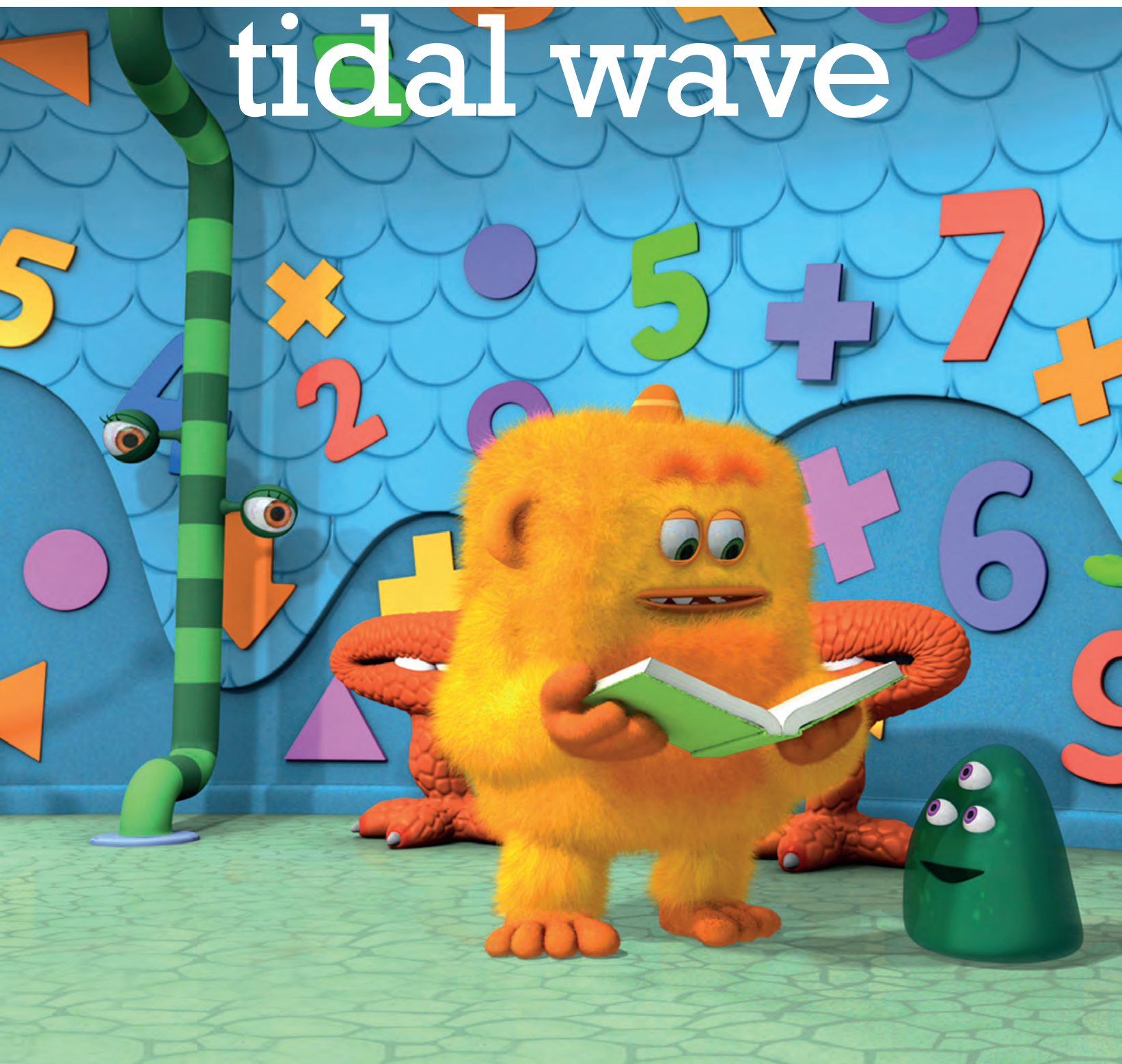


Method Animation's pirate action adventure series **ZAK STORM** sells throughout Europe

ear

# Kids OTT

## tidal wave





As technology continues to blur the line between linear and OTT, the opportunities for content providers are never greater than when delivering programming to digital natives



Monster Math Squad is on Hopster

**H**opster was an early entrant into the world of entertainment apps for kids and, with its emphasis on learning through entertainment, it is now available on tablet, mobile and connected TV in 100 countries. Founder and CEO Nick Walters says that the youngest children don't come to the platform with preconceptions, which gives content providers scope to push boundaries. "It's been interesting to see the importance of interactivity," says Walters. "We now deliver almost as many game plays a month as we do videos. We see a lot of mixed usage, particularly for the preschool audience. It tells you that kids don't have a mental border between 'This is a video service' and 'This is a games service', and never the two shall meet. They come looking for entertaining, engaging things to do, and if they find them then they'll follow those wherever they lead."

Hopster has now partnered with publisher Harper Collins to add picture books to its offering and has also launched a digital playroom to help kids develop their motor skills. Longstanding deals with Hit, Entertainment One and DHX Media deliver familiar characters like *Thomas & Friends* and *Bob the Builder* to its users, and Walters says they've had great success with *Learn to Draw* minis, which are 60-second segments.

Content with educational value is core for Celestial Tiger's channel Miao Mi TV, launched in Asia and now on Amazon in the US. "One of the good things about the Amazon platform in particular and OTT content more broadly

is the robust data that's available," says CEO Todd Miller. "It gives us a lot of insight into how consumers are using the content we provide and allows us to craft a better service."

Miao Mi TV users can select whether to watch shows in their native language or in Mandarin. "With the caveat that it is early days and our marketing is just getting into high gear, I think the biggest surprise for us is that our educational classroom content is being consumed significantly and often equally to our edutainment content" says Miller.

This content consists of short segments of one or two minutes that offer a specific and discrete educational point regarding language. Increasing content for its classroom area, providing more local-language options in Asia, launching in Europe and securing another major carrier in the US are all priorities.

Toon Goggles has deep roots in the kids OTT arena and is available on TV and mobile devices in over 196 countries. For CCO Lee Adams it's not a question of competing with major kids networks. "Our 24-hour, anywhere/anytime platform provides a 360-degree experience that is way beyond the standard viewing on kids networks," says Adams. "Not only does Toon Goggles offer a plethora of incredible content from all over the world, it also provides a robust music channel, video games, interactive e-books and fun camera-filter features."

Short-form, original animated series *Eddie is a Yeti* is a top performer on Toon Goggles, and Adams says: "Our content ranges in length from one minute to 11 minutes.



The compelling nature and creativity of the programming determines the user length and frequency. A great show performs well regardless of its length.”

*Magic Academy* teaches kids to do tricks, and Adam says that Toon Goggles wants more live-action to broaden the range of content beyond animation.

Digital Media Rights has benefitted from the data OTT services can provide. With five other OTT properties in its portfolio, kids service Cocoro is its newest launch. “We have the benefit of being a large aggregator into major

platforms in the US, so we have a lot of data,” says director, programming and marketing, JP Garcia. “One of the reasons we put out a kids channel is that we saw those titles resonate, and we saw very strong view-through rates.”

Garcia says previous OTT services were able to come up the rankings with little marketing, but with the major networks coming out with their own OTT products, the landscape was busier in 2016 for Cocoro’s launch. Cocoland is an area of content populated by six original characters and is a way of forging a bond with users.

“That’s the first step in creating some original content,” says Garcia. “We have a group of characters we created, all unique with a backstory, and we intend to scale that, whether through original programmes within the channel or creating new apps specifically for the characters. It is our intention to create an audience not just around the content that we acquire but the content we create.”

Cocoro aims to stand out by combining international brands including *Hello Kitty* with shows like Korean titles *Pororo* and *Kung Food*. “The difference between Cocoro and major kids networks is that we offer very strong international content,” says Garcia. “A lot of families travel to different countries, and kids are exposed to original content in those territories. But when they come back the shows are not there. So we have been very strong in that we are in every market, constantly acquiring new content and focussed on international content.”

Kids Genius Cartoon Channel is known for its signature Baby Genius and SpacePOP brands, and its move onto Roku, Apple TV and Amazon Fire will increase its reach by 20 million households.

“We are seeing our greatest opportunity for growth through OTT streaming platforms,” says president of Kid Genius Cartoon Channel Debra Pierson. “There has been huge growth for connected TV. Viewing content across different platforms used to mean you had to keep logging in and choose your selection every time on different devices. This way, you set up, and whatever device you pick up, you start where you left off.”

User’s ability to create their own schedule - whether it’s adults curating playlists for their pre-schoolers or older children making choices for themselves - is another big attraction of OTT. “It gives us an ability to really understand our consumers,” say Pierson.

“You can see by their viewing habits what they’re watching and tuning into. We also have an opportunity to test out our original programming. You can run shorter-form content and see how it’s going to work.”

As connected TV rolls out, enabling consumers to sync phones, tablets and TVs, the blurred line between linear and OTT will disappear altogether. As Hopster’s Nick Walter’s says: “OTT is a tidal wave. It’s how most video content will be delivered in five years time.” **TBI**


**Kids Genius**

**Cocoro**



TIP  
the  
MOUSE

The Wild Adventures of  
Blinky Bill

Heidi

Maya  
The Bee

Mia  
and me

ARTHUR  
AND THE MINIMOYS  
THE SERIES

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# Emerging studios



**In spite of the challenges, some studios that had been offering services on a work-for-hire basis are starting to build content creation into their business models, reports Jane Marlow**

August Media's *Sherlock Sam*

**T**he fact that a company with the global reputation of Framestore started to “covertly” road test the idea of content creation two years ago gives an indication of the scale of the task. After a period of fine-tuning processes and ideas, Framestore executive producer Simon Whalley says its internal incubator, Ventures, is now poised to roll out across the whole company.

“The films that we do are so visual-effects-

heavy that our teams of people bring a lot of their skills and a lot of creativity and innovation to those projects,” Whalley says. “We get paid to do that but we don’t get anything beyond it. It struck us that we have 1,500 staff members in our various buildings in various cities and it felt like something we should try.”

Projects are pitched to an in-house board, which decides which to support. “It’s a bit like angel funding,” says Whalley. “We’re not funding the production, it’s about creating a

prototype or development package to take to market.”

Surprisingly for the giant in the CG world, the first original is a 2D animation with Adorable Media called *Iggy and the Missing Links*. Pitched at Cartoon Forum in 2015, Whalley says the show is “a long way down the road” with broadcasters and distributors. CG offerings *Space Bunny*, for 2-to-6-year-olds, and *Loopy Fruit*, for 6-to-9s, are also in development as part of a 15-project development slate that



taps into the Framestore talent pool.

When making the move into production, creating a reputation as an outfit that broadcasters, networks and distributors can have confidence in is key. This was Blue Zoo's strategy. MD Oli Hyatt says the company, which operates across children's, commercials, work-for-hire and corporate, ramped up its kids content slowly, showing at each step what it was capable of. "On the back of *Those Scurvy Rascals* for Nick Jr. we produced two series of preschool show *Olive the Ostrich*, which sold around the world," says Hyatt. "That was a step up from what we'd done before; it was a bigger show and more ambitious. We used the money we were making from the other series and from our advertising work to produce 104 episodes of five minutes. It was all building up to try and get a major production off the ground, which was *Digby Dragon*."

In terms of development, Hyatt says the opportunities are at the ends of the content spectrum. "There are shows you can make for a TV budget that are simpler and perhaps not so ambitious in technicality or scale and which you probably won't be able to do much merchandising with," he says. "Or you make a show that you're prepared to put money into, where you go in all guns blazing with merchandise selling around the world. What we decided not to do was something that got stuck in the middle of those two things. I think those are the ones that are losing money at the moment. They aren't doing anything new, can't merchandise, cost a lot of money and can't get the money back from international sales."

The financial benefit of owning a successful kids IP is well known. Head of animation at Cardiff-based Cloth Cat Animation Adam Bailey says original IP had always been part of the plan, but the company wants to strike a balance between work-for-hire and content creation. "Work-for-hire will always be a part of the process because we recognise the need for collaboration," says Bailey, whose development slate is largely driven by in-house ideas.

"We have taken some original IP to market over the last couple of years," adds Bailey, "but as we're relatively young, we wanted to make sure we proved our ability not only as a studio but also that we could produce quality animation, before committing too much money and time to developing our own IP."

Working on Raymond Briggs' animated feature *Ethel & Ernest* with London-based Lupus



Framestore's *Space Bunny*



Lupus Films' *Ethel and Ernest*



Films was a part of that journey, and the aim for Cloth Cat is to do new and challenging projects that 'upskill' the crew. The studio's two lead development series are *Little Oaks* for 4-to-6-year-olds and *Lunar Lodge*, an action-adventure space comedy for 7-to-11-year-olds.

The studio has also collaborated with Beijing-based Magic Mall's *Luo Bao Bei* character for 5-to-8-year-olds, which is the company's first production outside China.

Instead of chasing the North American and European markets, August Media's strategy, meanwhile, has been to target emerging markets such as India, the Philippines, Indonesia and Southeast Asia. Founder and CEO Jyotirmoy Saha explains that the localisation of kids channels has turned India in particular into a market that creates and seeks out original content.

"For the Philippines and Indonesian market we're creating an older, teenage action drama inspired by hip-hop and basketball culture called, *Barangay 143*," says Saha, who has Japan's TV Asahi on board as coproducer on the anime series.

Saha says that the trend towards animated content for older age groups is being driven by the quality of animation that is now able to bring compelling stories to life. Its other property, detective comedy, *Sherlock Sam*, based on the popular book, is aimed at the 7-to-10s in the Southeast Asian market. "It is a massive emerging market," he says.

Whereas August Media was set up to create IP, providing services has always been part of the strategy. "The cycle of any investments you make in animation are fairly long, and having a studio associated with the company helped us put out our skills for service work," says Saha, whose company has opened ASI Studios in Manila. "In 2017, from a revenue perspective, IP will lead more than services," adds Saha. That doesn't mean that activity will decrease in terms of services, but that successful IP packs a bigger financial punch.

Lupus Films mitigates the risk associated with originating IP by investing in literary evergreens such as *We're Going on a Bear Hunt* and *The Snowman and the Snowdog*. Its latest project is a 2D animation feature based on Michael Morpurgo's book *Kensuke's Kingdom* with Melsuine Productions.

"We were lucky enough to win the BFI Vision award a couple of years ago to develop animated feature ideas, because no-one was doing it in



Henson's *Lily's Driftwood Bay*



Blue Zoo's *Digby Dragon*



Jellyfish's *Dennis & Gnasher*Lupus Films' *Kensuke's Kingdom*

*Pajanimals* and Sesame Workshop on *Sesame Street*, to originating IP such as mixed-media preschool offering *Lily's Driftwood Bay*. By the summer there will be 150 people in the studio working on three shows.

"With our own studio full, we're taking a serious look at an Irish footprint in Dublin," adds Williams, who Sixteen South will also be looking to form chosen creative partnerships with studios that can match its vision.

He describes his slate as varied, and it is made up of six projects including animation and a live-action family drama. "For us the ability to write and tell our own stories is the biggest attraction of creating IP," says Williams, who says work-for-hire is no longer on the agenda. "Partnerships where we can get involved creatively and commercially, we will do that," he says.

"The greatest asset we've got is our creativity. There's no point in us just making someone else's show because that's not a good use of our time. Working on a show alongside someone, then yes, absolutely. We're always looking for the best partners to make those shows with."

The combination of creativity and capitalisation is key for visual effects and animation studio Jellyfish Pictures and, after more than a decade concentrating on work-for-hire it was the 2014 UK tax credits that prompted the move.

Jellyfish CEO Phil Dobree says Sprout hit, *Floogals*, a 52x11mins live-action/CGI blend developed with Zodiak Kids, was the project that proved the company had the infrastructure and pipeline to produce the content.

"It seemed a good idea that, if that worked, it would prove a point and lead on to other things," says Dobree.

*Dennis & Gnasher* came next, and then *Bits and Bobs* for Fremantle. "In the last year or two we have been developing our own ideas, and those are the ones we're taking further in-house or talking to various other financial partners about," says Dobree. "We are confident one or two will come off. A lot of people want to work with us, and that's the position we wanted to be in. We have our reputation in this area; to go from digital effects to kids animation without any background in it would have been very tough.

"We've expanded the animation side of the business, because right from the beginning the intention was that it wasn't worth being in this business if you don't get IP." **TBI**

the UK other than Aardman," says joint MD Ruth Fielding. She says Lupus' ambition is to become "the Aardman of the 2D world", and it has four animated features in development. She points out that if Lupus wants to retain top-class animators, they have to have top-class projects on which they want to work.

The availability of talent is also an issue for Belfast-based Sixteen South, which has moved into a £1 million (\$1.25 million) studio. Founder and creative director Colin Williams set up the company in 2008 and has progressed from working on projects as a creative partner with Jim Henson on



# Kids Hot Picks

THE SHOW: *Mr Magoo*

THE PRODUCER: Xilam Animation

THE DISTRIBUTOR: Xilam Animation

THE BROADCASTER: France Televisions, Cartoon Network Asia

THE CONCEPT: A 2D 78x7mins animated comedy which revives classic character *Mr Magoo* and gives him a hamster nemesis

*Mr Magoo* is a 2D animation series for 6-to-11-year-olds, based around a classic character that first saw the light of day in 1949. The character is owned by Dreamworks Animation, but the new show is being made under licence by Xilam for France 3. Cartoon Network Asia is also on board the show, which is being teased at MIPTV, with the first full episodes coming at MIPCOM (probably two or three).

The original *Mr Magoo* focused on a stubborn old man who would constantly

get himself in scrapes because of his refusal to accept his shortsightedness. "In the new version, we have created a richer world for Magoo," says Xilam founder Marc du Pontavice. "In the classic 3-4 minute cartoons, it was all about the chaos he caused. Now there is also a clever, lunatic hamster that wants to take over the world. In each episode, Magoo prevents the hamster from achieving his plans without realising he has done so. He also has a dog called Mr Cat."

Du Pontavice says the decision to go 2D

was because "it works very well with slapstick, physical comedy". As for the decision to revive *Magoo*, he says: "Some people believe adult characters are difficult for a kid audience, but there are great successes like *Inspector Gadget* and *Mr Bean*. One thing we have done is make him look ageless rather than an old man."

Du Pontavice is not expecting kids to be aware of the *Magoo* heritage, "but their parents will know the brand, and that will help with building awareness around the new show".





**THE SHOW:** *Kosmoo*

**THE PRODUCERS:** Studio 100 Media

**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Studio 100 Media

**THE BROADCASTER:** Studio 100 TV

**THE CONCEPT:** A live-action comedy-adventure about a boy and his bionic dog solving mysteries in a sleepy village

*Kosmoo* is a live-action adventure series that follows Robbe and his bionic dog Kosmoo as they embark on a journey to solve crimes and mysteries in the sleepy village of Seaview. They are assisted by Ellis, the girl next door, who is a wheelchair user. Robbe's bedroom can be transformed into a secret control

centre from which Ellis and Robbe are able to guide Kosmoo's activities. Robbe's parents Esther and Markus are oblivious to the fact that Kosmoo is not your average pet.

The 39x25mins series will launch internationally at MIPTV. "*Kosmoo* debuted on Studio 100 TV in the Benelux and has already

been picked up by public Swedish kids' channel SVT Barnkanalen as well as public kids broadcaster NRK Super in Norway," says Martin Krieger, head of global distribution at Studio 100 Media. "It is targeted at 6-to-9-year-olds and is gender-neutral."

In terms of its attraction to buyers, Krieger says: "It combines comedy and crime in a suitable and entertaining way for children. The setting in a scenic coastal village with the main characters living on a houseboat gives the series an appealing look. Robbe's father is the 'comedian' of the show, while Robbe's mother is the voice of reason and sense. This leads to entertaining conflicts. Additionally, the friendship between Ellis and Robbe enables them to work together very closely."

On the subject of its being live-action, Krieger says: "Live-action always speaks to trends and fashion, which may not be global but local. The extent to which we can create this local relevance, together with a universal appeal, determines the distribution success. We have a history of producing live action shows and distributing them successfully."



**THE SHOW:** *Trulli Tales*

**THE PRODUCERS:** Gaumont, Groupe PVP, Congedo Culturarte, Fandango

**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Gaumont

**THE BROADCASTERS:** Disney Junior EMEA, RAI, Radio Canada, Globosat

**THE CONCEPT:** 2D animation series about four talented young wizard chefs from the magical kingdom of Trulliland

*Trulli Tales* tells the story of four young wizard chefs – Ring, Zip, Stella and Sun – learning to grow up thanks to words of wisdom from a magical grandma living in an ancestral Magic Cookbook. Chosen as the Magic Cookbook's secret keepers, the four wizard chefs use their

wands to thwart the evil Copperpot's plans to steal it and control Trulliland. By understanding Trulli Grandma's words of wisdom, the four win their fights against Copperpot and grow up learning to face everyday issues.

Targeted at the older end of the preschool

market, the 52x11mins show was commissioned by Disney Junior EMEA, RAI, Radio Canada and Globosat and is coproduced by Gaumont, Groupe PVP, Congedo Culturarte and Fandango.

Vanessa Shapiro, president of worldwide distribution at Gaumont says: "We are in the final stages of production. Our broadcasters will take delivery from April to October, and the show should premiere during autumn 2017. It was produced in 2D, which helped us to maintain the artistic consistency and enable us to develop a lot of colourful locations, props and a rich range of characters."

Commenting on the show's appeal to buyers, Shapiro says: "Part storybook magic with a little *Masterchef Jr.* and a dash of wizardry, there's nothing quite like *Trulli Tales* in the market right now. It combines children's love of magic with the fun of cooking, and relatable characters."

As for the cooking component, she says: "We want kids to have fun watching the adventures of our wizards chefs and along the way, learn about healthy food ingredients and recipes in an entertaining and playful way."

"Thirteen additional one-minute shorts will help kids to understand how simple ingredients can produce distinctive, surprising and succulent results."

**THE SHOW:** *Find Me in Paris*  
**THE PRODUCER:** Cottonwood Media  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Federation Entertainment/ZDF Enterprises  
**THE BROADCASTER:** ZDF  
**THE CONCEPT:** A 26x26mins live action show about a time-travelling Russian princess attempting to become a Paris Opera ballerina

A half-hour weekly teen drama, *Find Me In Paris*, centres on Lena Grisky, a young ballet dancer bidding to become the next international prima ballerina at the world-renowned Paris Opera. Her situation is complicated, however, by the fact that she is a time-travelling Russian princess from the year 1905 – and if she achieves her ambition she'll cause a 'time ripple'.

Further complicating things is her romantic life. Back in 1905, Lena falls for Henri, the son of the school janitor, who sets her on her time travel but doesn't make it to 2015. In the modern day, she has a crush on her dance partner, Max, who creates an underground company in the vaults below the Paris Opera.

Greenlit by ZDF, the big-budget show is produced by Federation Entertainment's kids division, Cottonwood Media, at the Paris

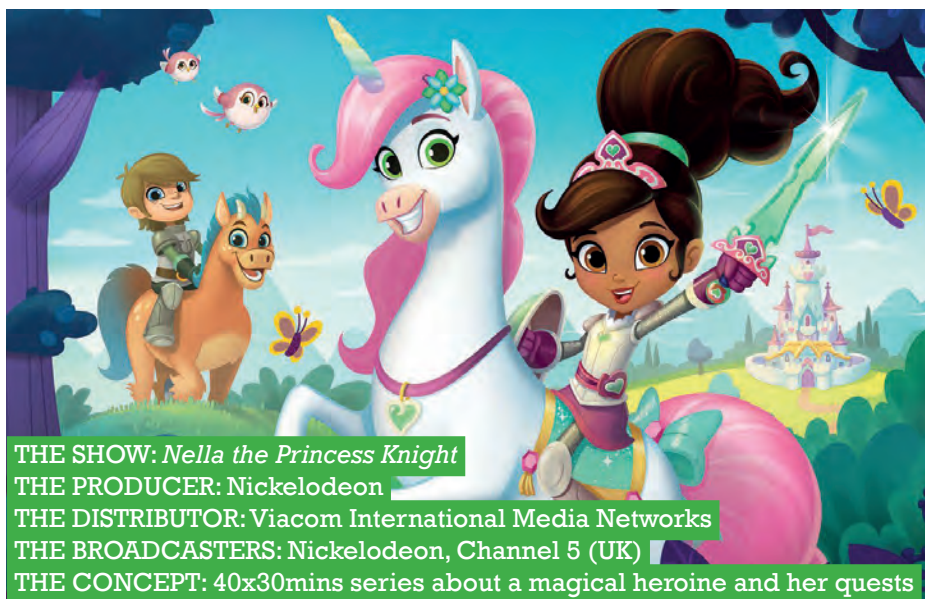


Opera, where the international cast will work with choreographers to ensure that the dance aspect of the show is truly authentic and of high standard. The production team is led by Jill Girling & Lori Mather-Welch (*Ride*).

Cottonwood CEO David Michel says the show was triggered by ZDF's funding, but that there are now Canadian and French partners on board too. In terms of what makes

it distinctive, he says: "It is the kind of high-quality serialised drama that you wouldn't have seen in kids ten years ago. It's a good example of how SVOD players like Netflix have changed things."

The show is planned as a 26-parts and will be made in English. According to Michel, it is international in feel with characters coming from a range of countries.



**THE SHOW:** *Nella the Princess Knight*  
**THE PRODUCER:** Nickelodeon  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Viacom International Media Networks  
**THE BROADCASTERS:** Nickelodeon, Channel 5 (UK)  
**THE CONCEPT:** 40x30mins series about a magical heroine and her quests

*Nella* is, as the title of the Viacom cartoon series suggests, both a knight and a princess. The show was originally just *Nella the Knight*, perhaps an effort to go after the Disney audience and create an L&M friendly property, with the Mouse

House famous for its princesses and its toys.

As Viacom owns Channel 5, the show was the first that saw its UK channel, its Milkshake kids block, and Viacom's kids net Nickelodeon work up a series together.

The show was created by Christine Ricci, who was involved with Nick hits *Blaze and the Monster Machines* and *Team Umizoomi*, and sets out, in a fun way, to show that there's more than one way to be a princess or a knight.

"It came out of the Milkshake and Nickelodeon relationship," says Caroline Beaton, senior VP of international programme and format sales. "It is very much a Nick property, with high production values and budget, and a Nick preschool feel."

Despite the female lead, the Viacom International Media Networks exec says the show skews girl/boy. "It's gender neutral with a mix of boy and girl characters in there."

The cast of characters includes Nella's unicorn sidekick Trinket, her best friend Sir Garrett and his horse Clod. "It breaks through gender stereotypes and ideas of knights, and also princesses a la *Frozen*," Beaton says. "She is courageous and confident, and the ideas of self-confidence and compassion are important."

The show is for Nick in the US and other markets and Milkshake and Nick in the UK. Viacom will be launching it internationally at MIPTV.





**THE SHOW:** *Tangled: The Series*  
**THE PRODUCER:** Walt Disney TV Animation  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Disney Media Distribution  
**THE BROADCASTER:** Disney Channels Worldwide  
**THE CONCEPT:** A TV series follow-up to the 2010 feature film *Tangled*, which Rapunzel seeks out epic adventures

*Tangled: The Series* is a Walt Disney TV Animation series, based on the hit 2010 animated feature film *Tangled*. Distributed by Disney Media Distribution, the series premiered on March 24, 2017, on Disney Channels around the world. Prior to launch, the show was already greenlit by Disney for a second season.

In narrative terms, the TV series is set

between the events of the feature film and the start of the 2012 short film *Tangled Ever After*. It tells the story of Princess Rapunzel acquainting herself with her parents, her kingdom and the people of Corona. Her natural curiosity about the world makes her realise that there is so much more she needs to learn before she can accept her royal destiny. So she seeks out epic adventures,

accompanied by husband-to-be Eugene, chameleon sidekick Pascal and the no-nonsense horse Maximus among others.

In terms of appeal to buyers, Helene Etzi, senior VP and general manager, Disney Channels EMEA and GM of Disney Channels France, says: "It's a universal human story, and a modern retelling of a classic story. Rapunzel is a princess, and the audience know that from the beginning, but she doesn't know it until the end, and that makes for a character that is far more relatable to audiences, to young girls, to older girls, to anyone who's been cooped up and had dreams of something bigger and needs to get out there and try and do it. It's also a fairy tale turned on its head – instead of Rapunzel being the damsel in distress, more often than not she's the heroine."

Regarding the challenges with taking a hit film to TV, Etzi says: "More TV networks than ever before are mining their film collections to find ideas for new series. Ultimately, it always come back to telling a good story, and telling a very compelling story that speaks to audiences around the world, wherever they come from." As for the target audience, she says: "It's targeted at children, but can be enjoyed by the whole family."

**THE SHOW:** *Kody Kapow*  
**THE PRODUCER:** Zodiak Kids Studios  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Zodiak Kids  
**THE BROADCASTER:** Sprout (US)  
**THE CONCEPT:** Martial-arts-inspired action comedy for 4-to-6s

Having successfully launched Zodiak Kids' *Floogals*, Sprout has lined up another of the producer's shows, *Kody Kapow*.

Greenlit by Sprout senior VP Andrew Beecham before he left the kids net, Zodiak Kids will be launching the show at MIPTV.

The preschool toon series follows the titular Kody, a part-Chinese boy who goes to China to spend the summer with his aunt and uncle and grandparents. A cultural consultant ensured the Chinese setting is accurate and sensitively portrayed in the martial-arts action comedy, which was animated in Canada by Boat Rocker's Jam Filled.

The CG show was created by Alexander Bar and developed for television by Robin Stein and Dan Franklin. There is, of course, fighting, but it is



choreographed and the emphasis is more on the positive aspects of martial arts.

"It's a nice idea; it's more about the mindfulness side of martial arts, and qualities such as concentration and perseverance," says Zodiak Kids Studios chief creative officer Eryk Casemiro.

Kody uses these martial-arts skills, which have been imparted to him by his martial-arts-master grandfather, as he defends his village and sets out on adventures.

He is joined by his female cousin and their

tiger friend Stripes, who is voiced by *Seinfeld* star Jason Alexander. The chief baddie is a monkey who thinks

he should be in charge, and his two sidekicks.

Sprout is hoping *Kody Kapow* can deliver the same level of success that *Floogals* did, as the NBCUniversal net ramps up original content.

The series will naturally appeal to boys but has girl appeal too, Zodiak says ahead of taking *Kody* to Cannes. "Martial arts and action equal boys, but Kody's cousin is a girl, kind of a young Lucy Liu, and the tiger, Stripes, help make it gender neutral," Casemiro says.



**THE SHOW:** *The Zoo*  
**THE PRODUCERS:** DHX Media, BBC Studios NHU  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** DHX Media  
**THE BROADCASTER:** CBBC (UK)  
**THE CONCEPT:** An observational live-action/CGI documentary with a comedic twist, about the lives of talking animals at a zoo

Coproduced by DHX Media and the team from the BBC Studios Natural History Unit (*Planet Earth II*), the 30x11mins *The Zoo* is an observational live-action and CGI documentary with a comedic twist, about the lives of talking animals at a zoo. Shot in mockumentary style, it follows the everyday actions of animals as they

make friends, forge allegiances and attempt to manipulate each other.

The show uses state-of-the-art CGI and facial-tracking technology to enable the animals to give viewers their own unique insight into the behind-the-scenes workings of the zoo. Along the way, zookeepers give their version of events,

but only the audience and the narrator will be privy to both sides.

*The Zoo* was commissioned by Cheryl Taylor, controller of CBBC, and will premiere on CBBC in the UK in 2017. DHX Media is handling global distribution for the show outside the UK. Commenting on the appeal of the concept, DHX's executive VP distribution and content Josh Scherba says: "The comedy that runs throughout the series will appeal to both kids and their families. Filming live animals and real zookeepers combined with the art of documentary storytelling and comedy writing is unique in the children's broadcast space."

Also distinctive is the production approach, says Scherba. "This is our first collaboration with the BBC's award-winning Natural History Unit and CBBC to create a character-driven comedic mockumentary of a 'never-seen-before' side of the animals at the zoo," he says. "The amazing voice-talent and state-of-the-art CGI and facial tracking technology have brought the animals' personalities to life. The ensemble cast has many stand-out personalities that will bring viewers back for more."



**THE SHOW:** *The Pirates Next Door*  
**THE PRODUCER:** Cyber Group Studios  
**THE DISTRIBUTOR:** Cyber Group Studios  
**THE BROADCASTER:** France Télévisions  
**THE CONCEPT:** An animated comedy about a group of pirates moving into a small town and trying to fit in with the locals

Cyber Group Studios will be at MIPTV with the first episodes of *The Pirates Next Door*, an HD/CGI comedy animation series running to 52 11-minute episodes. Based on the book

by Jonny Duddle, the show was developed for France Télévisions and has been presold to Télé-Quebec (Canada), SVT (Sweden), NRK (Norway) and AB Svensk. It is due to

start broadcasting in autumn 2017.

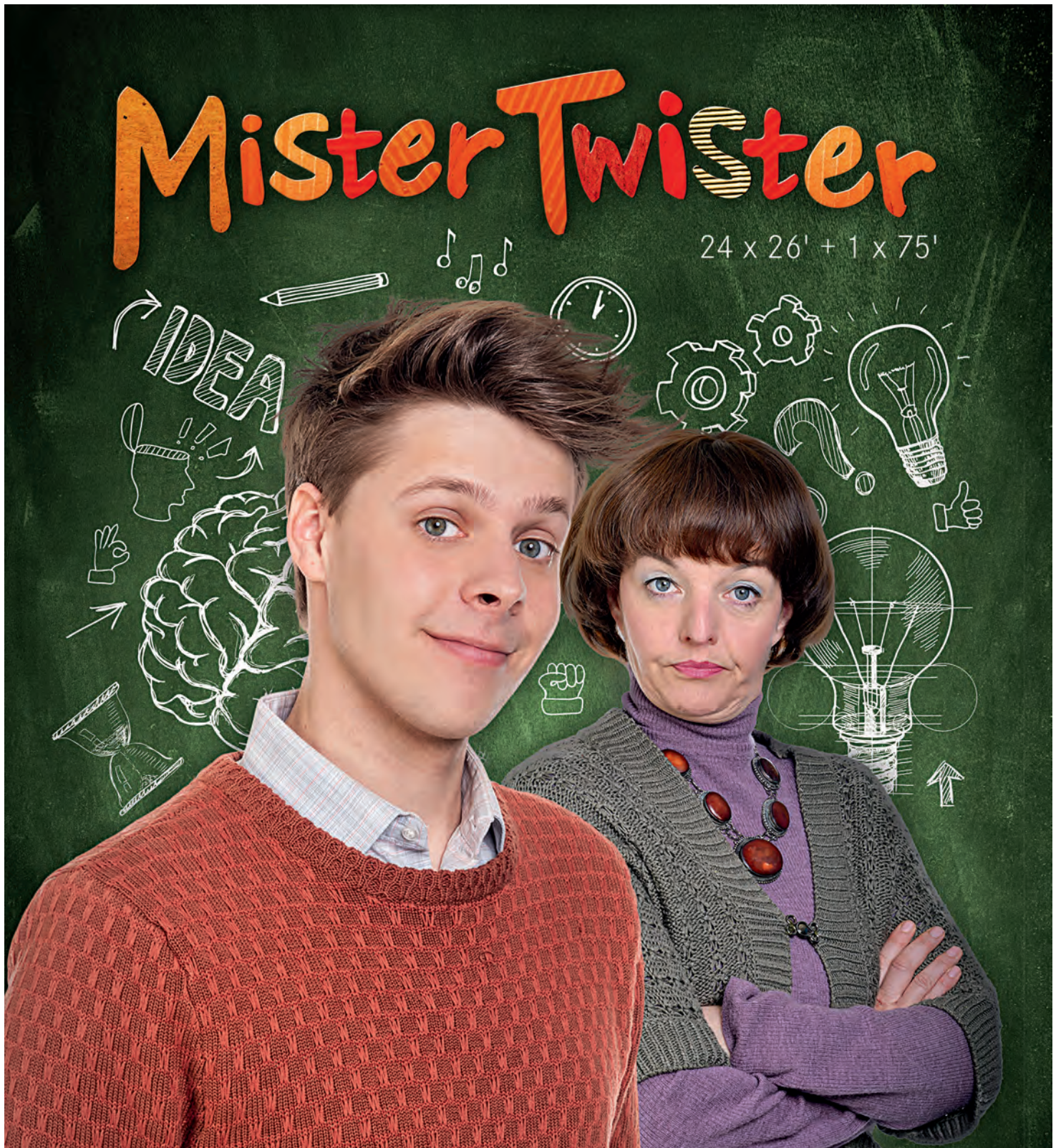
The story takes place at Dull-on-Sea, where the peace and quiet is suddenly turned upside down by the appearance of a family of pirates, including a boy called Jim Lad. For central character Matilda the arrival of these new neighbours is a dream come true. Despite their differences, an unshakeable friendship is formed between Jim and Matilda as they shatter the calm of their tiny town, turning every day into a fresh adventure.

CGS CEO and chairman Pierre Sissman says: "We picked up the rights to Jonny's book four or five years ago when it wasn't that well known, but it has sold a lot around the world since then. It appealed to us for two reasons. Firstly, because it is visually astounding, and we knew we could do a great visual adaptation.

"Secondly, because the story is very current. At its heart it is a story about diversity, with new people arriving in the neighbourhood and trying to integrate themselves."

This doesn't get in the way of the show's humour, Sissman says: "It has values, but also comedy that kids 6-9 will relate to." **TBI**





MIPTV stand no. P-1.L2, P-1.M1



# Boomerang's stream dream

In March Turner and sister company Warner Bros. rolled out a new streaming service in the US using the Boomerang brand. TBI spoke to Christina Miller, president, Cartoon Network, Adult Swim and Boomerang about the launch



**CM:** The content on Boomerang has always been a combination of content from the two companies. This now gives us the ability to extend the brand.

**TBI:** What is the balance between new programming and back catalogue? Will new episodes of loved brands be the hook that attracts viewers to subscribe to Boomerang?

**CM:** The content plan will be a healthy balance of both with additional episodes being added weekly.

However, the timeless nature of the robust library of beloved shows has such a multi-generational appeal it will attract animation lovers of all ages.

**TBI:** What is the timescale for roll out onto Amazon, Roku, Apple TV?

**CM:** Boomerang will initially launch on Web, iOS and Android Devices and the other platforms throughout 2017.

**TBI:** What is the advantage of OTT content over linear?

**CM:** This product is another way for us to reach our fans and give them the choice and control they desire. While many enjoy the Boomerang experience one way others want the opportunity to go deeper into the library.

**TBI:** What made the time right to launch Boomerang SVOD now?

**CM:** Exploring opportunities in the premium SVOD space and putting our fans at the center of everything we do has been a priority for Time Warner.

We've been having ongoing discussions with Warner Bros. on how we could find even more ways to expand our Kids businesses together.

Those factors combined with the unrivalled collection of animated assets across both companies made this the right time.

**TBI:** What was the motivation for bringing the combined content of Turner and Warner Bros. together under one roof?



**TBI:** Do you expect what we now call OTT content will eventually replace traditional linear channels?

**CM:** No. This is just another option for fans to experience content.

**TBI:** Do you have plans for international roll-out?

**CM:** At this time, the Boomerang subscription service is US only. **TBI**





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GAUMONT PRESENTS

# Troll Tales

52x11'

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